

The background of the slide is a stylized illustration of a bonfire. It features a large, dark brown log in the foreground, with a fire burning behind it. The fire is depicted with vibrant, swirling colors of orange, yellow, and red, suggesting intense flames. The entire scene is framed by a thick, solid orange border.

# The Bonfire Boys

Events of 1846

Every November 5th  
in Lewes, Sussex, a spectacular  
"Bonfire Night" takes place,  
with torches, fireworks, music and  
elaborate costumes.  
Thousands of people attend.

The tradition began as a  
commemoration of the 1605  
Guy Fawkes gunpowder plot, and hit  
a crisis point in 1847 when eight  
Bonfire Boys were sent to prison for  
causing a riot.

My ancestor John Stanbridge  
and his brother Thomas  
were among them.



“Our readers scarcely require to be  
informed of the riotous proceedings  
which, under the guise of celebrating the  
Gunpowder Plot, have for many years  
disgraced the town of Lewes.”



The grossest outrages and excesses have year after year been committed on the 5th of November, when large numbers of people disguised with masks and armed with bludgeons have held possession of the town, rolling tar barrels about the streets and letting off squibs and rockets.

Several attempts have been made to put down the nuisance, but all have failed, the “Bonfire Boys” opposing and out-numbering the strength sent against them.

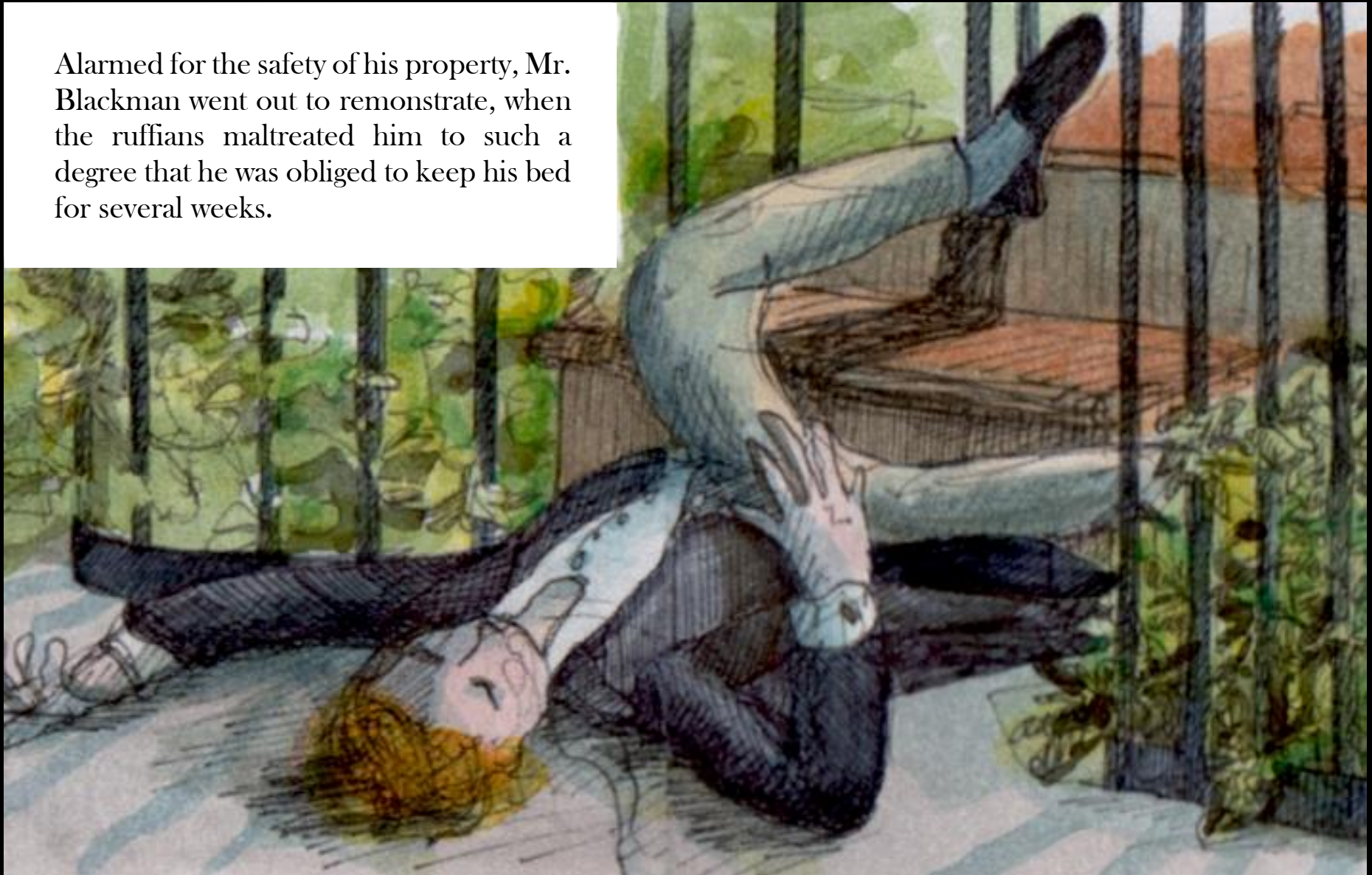


Elated by their success they last year rolled a number of tar barrels to the door of Mr.

Blackman, a magistrate who had denounced their lawless conduct, and lighted them sufficiently near the door to cause serious apprehension that his house would be destroyed.



Alarmed for the safety of his property, Mr. Blackman went out to remonstrate, when the ruffians maltreated him to such a degree that he was obliged to keep his bed for several weeks.







This affair determined the Magistrates to take this year decided steps for the suppression of the riots.

## Sources

“England & Wales, Criminal Registers, 1791-1892” [database online] Ancestry (<http://www.ancestry.com> : accessed 9 July 2011), entry for John Stanbridge, date of trial 20 March 1848, sentenced to imprisonment; citing The National Archives of the UK, Home Office: Criminal Registers, Middlesex and Home Office: Criminal Registers, England and Wales, series HO 27, piece 86, page 276.

*Brighton Gazette*, November 4 and 11, 1847, and excerpts transcribed from the *Sussex Express* of November 13, 1847. With sincere appreciation to Jim Etherington, of the Lewes Historical Society, August 2011.

“Spring Assizes, Home Circuit, Lewes, March 23,” *The Times* (London), 24 March 1848, page 7, cols 4-5.

“Lewes Bonfire Night Celebrations,” [online] Lewes website (<http://www.lewes.co.uk/bonfire.aspx> : accessed July 15, 2011).

“Lewes Bonfire Celebrations,” by Alex Leith [online] Viva Lewes website (<http://www.lewesbonfirecelebrations.com/article/1847-bonfire-riots/> : accessed July 15, 2011).

Police Depositions, “Trial of Eight Men for Riot and Tumult in Lewes, 5 November, 1847,” National Archives U.K., ASSI 36/6, 18 pages, received 9 August 9 2011 via email.

Excerpt from *Sussex Agricultural Express*, 23 October 1847, transcribed by Jim Etherington of the Lewes Historical Society and kindly provided via email, August 2011.

